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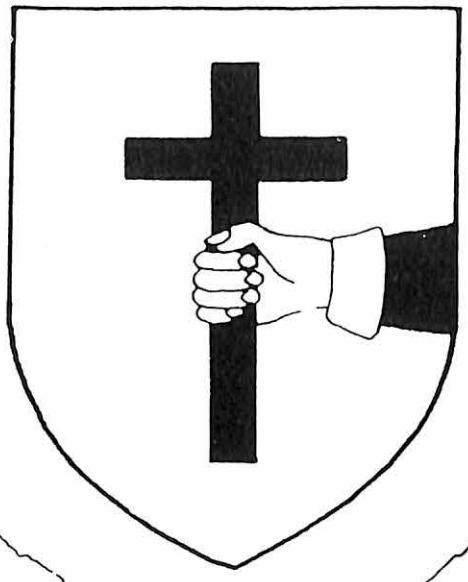
Ó Domhnaill Abú



O Donnell Clan Newsletter No. 11

Summer 1989

Larkfield House, built by Conn (24).

To Rome by Boat, Coach and Horseback

(A lecture given by His Eminence, Tomas O Fiaich, Cardinal Archbishop of Armagh, at Rathmullan in Sept. 1988. The following is a synopsis of that lecture and is reproduced here by his kind permission and that of the Donegal Historical Society. The lecturer stressed the fact that in this talk he was more concerned with the human side of the story.)
For a list of the O'Donnell participants and their fate see ODA No.8.

A year before the 'Flight Chichester had got word that Rory O'Donnell and Cuchonnacht Maguire, Chief of Fermanagh were planning to depart to the Continent. Maguire left in May 1607 and in Brussels contacted Henry O'Neill, son of the Earl of Tyrone, who was colonel of the Irish Regiment in the Spanish Army in the Low Countries. With a grant of a thousand pounds from the Archduke Albert, governor of the Netherlands, they hired a ship, disguised her as a fishing smack and under the command of captain, John Rath sailed from Dunkirk in Aug. 1607. On the 25th. of the same month (4th. of Sept. in the modern style calendar) she dropped anchor in Lough Swilly where she remained for nine days. Along with her came Cuchonnacht Maguire, Matthew Tully (O'Donnell's secretary), and Donnchadh O Briain. Upon coming to Lough Swilly Donnchadh landed by night and went immediately to Rory who in turn sent word to O'Neill. O'Neill was in Slane Co. Meath for a meeting with Chichester at the time. By the 8th. of Sept. he was on his way stopping at Armagh where he collected the Altar Plate of Armagh Cathedral and brought it with him for safekeeping to Louvain. This collection survived until 1741 but its whereabouts is unknown today. So hasty was O'Neill's departure that he left behind his youngest son, Conn, who was out on fosterage and could not be contacted in time. Hugh made a speedy journey, meeting with Caffir O'Donnell at Ballindrait and together they arrived at Rathmullan on the 14th. Sept. Caffir's second son, also Conn, did not turn up in time and eventually they left without him. Therefore we can appreciate the urgency and the hard decisions that had to be made before the "Noble shipload" was ready to sail.

Having taken on board sufficient supplies of food and water, they sailed at noon on Friday 14th. Sept. the Feast of the Holy Cross. Altogether there were ninety nine people whom we divide into four groups -
(1) Over thirty men and women who finally reached Rome.
(2) Twenty more consisting of children with their teachers and nurses who remained in Flanders.
(3) Twenty three who joined the Irish Regiment in the Spanish Army.
(4) Seventeen, some priests and some clerical students who remained in Flanders to join the Irish seminaries there like Louvain and Douai.

Having sailed down Lough Swilly they headed west where they saw their last sight of Tyrconnel. Going down the west coast of Ireland they kept well off shore to avoid the English ships at Galway but by so doing ran into very stormy weather that lasted 17 days. O'Neill , we are told, had a gold cross which contained a relic of the true cross and this he trailed in the water behind the ship, and according to O Cianain, it gave some relief from the storm.

The normal journey from Ireland to Coruna should have taken only four or five days but they were over fourteen days on board ship when nearing the Spanish coast on Sun. 30 Sept. the wind began to blow directly against them and made it impossible to sail for Spain. Instead they were blown up the English Channel, past the Channel Isles and after many adventures and with their stores depleted, the seasick passengers made a landing on the 4th. of Oct., the Feast of St. Francis, near the mouth of the Seine in the little port of Quillebeuf.

Here they were well received by the Governor of the town but he was reluctant to allow them to travel through Normandy without the King's(Henry IV of France) permission. So their interpreter, Matthew Tully was sent post haste to Paris to meet the King. Meanwhile the English Ambassador, Sir George Carew, requested the King to have them arrested and sent to England. The King, finding himself in a spot,

compromised. He did not allow them to travel through France to Spain but granted them permission to go to Spanish occupied Flanders.

That they did - it took almost a month, (4th. Oct. -9th. Nov.) to reach Louvain. After leaving Quillebeuf, the first big city they encountered was Rouen at the mouth of the Seine. Then they travelled to Amiens and Arras(by now they were in Spanish Netherlands, today Arras is in France) where they were met by Doctor Eugene McMahon, Bishop of Clogher and later Archbishop of Dublin.

From Mon. to Fri. (22 - 26th Oct.) they stayed at Douai with its twin Catholic seminaries. Here they received a tumultuous welcome as they were held as popular heroes by the students. On the 23rd. the Earls were invited to the English seminary where they were warmly welcomed and entertained at a banquet.

Two of the distinguished Irish Franciscans of the time, Fr. Florence Conry , founder of St. Anthony's Louvain and Fr. Robert McArthur of Co. Louth came to Flanders to meet them. From Douai they passed through Tournai and into Halle where O'Neill met his son Henry, who was colonel of the Irish Regiment. From Halle they were invited to dine in Brussels with the Marquis Spinola, commander of the Spanish Army in the Netherlands and they were also invited to visit the Archduke Albert at his palace at Binche. This visit must have been quite a dramatic one as present was de Lasso, a survivor of an Armada wreck twenty years earlier on the Donegal coast, where he saw 300 of his comrades put to death by Henry Hovendon, an English officer. Those spared , 45 in all, including de Lasso were force-marched to Dublin by Earl Rory's father, Aodh Dubh, and handed over to the authorities there. De Lasso and a few other high-ranking officers were exchanged for English prisoners in Spain. Here now at this meeting were de Lasso, Earl Rory and Henry Hovendon who had since come over to the Irish and was O'Neill's secretary.

From Fri. 9th.Nov. - Sun. 25th.Nov. they spent in Louvain, then about 40 of the men set out on horseback for Rome where they hoped to go by ship to Spain. They had travelled only 27 miles from Louvain to Namur when they were met by a messenger from King Philip of Spain ordering them to send their plans in writing and await his reply in Flanders. England and Spain had just made peace and Philip hoped to prolong it by avoiding trouble with England but at the same time he didn't wish to alienate himself from the Earls as he would wish Ireland on his side if circumstances changed.

After their initial disappointment, they settled down to spend the winter there. From here we are told they visited places of special interest. The river Schelt was frozen over that winter and they saw about 20,000 people enjoying themselves on the ice.

As the new year came they were under pressure from the Archduke to move on. He didn't wish to offend the English any longer. On Thurs. 28th. Feb. they began their long journey once again: 32 men on horseback with a carriage for the women. However the road was so bad that they had to abandon the carriage at Namur after 40 miles and the women too took to horseback. Inside a week they had crossed into Lorraine where they were entertained by the old Duke of Lorraine at his palace at Nancy. By the middle of March they passed into Switzerland and arrived in Basle, the first big protestant city they had encountered. The change was noticable, says O Cianain, 'the inhabitants are heretics', "Teampaill ro-mhoir ina bhfuil dealbhai de Luthar agus Calvin agus droch udair diobhailai eile".

They then moved on till they reached Lake Lucerne where they took to boats and sailed to the southern shore. On St. Patrick's Day in the middle of the Alps occurred the worst accident of the journey. While crossing the Devil's Bridge (Die Teufelsbrucke) which spans a deep gorge on the river Reuss near Fluelen, one of O'Neill's horses carrying most of his wealth panicked and fell into the cascading flood far below. While a few men made their way cautiously down the snowy ravine the rest continued on their journey. But no trace of the money was found. According to O'Cianain, this was a serious blow to O'Neill. The amount lost was one hundred and twenty pounds, estimated to be worth about five thousand pounds today.

A week later they came down and out of the Alps on the southern side and travelled to Lake Lugano where they made their second boat journey and reached Milan on the 23rd. March 1608. They were now on Spanish territory once

again and spent a fortnight there.Here they were generously received by the Spanish Governor Count de Fuentes; visited the Cathedral of Milan and stayed at the hostelery called "The Three Kings", this hotel is still there today.

From Milan to Rome still required a fortnight, they passed through Lodi, Piacenza, Bologna with its great fountain squirting water in the air as it still does today. Friday 18th. April they reached the Adriatic at Remini and Catolica. They were now within a few days of Rome which they eventualluy entered through the Porta del Populo on the 29th. April 1608 and immediately went to pray in St. Peter's Basilica. Thus their journey was completed.

In summing up, the lecturer said, they had travelled approximately 1200 miles since landing on the Continent. That was an average of 40 Kilometres a day. 55- was the longest they had covered in any one day with the exception of their boat journeys. They were well armed and on a few occasions were escorted . Seemingly they had no difficulty obtaining lodgings. They were received graciously and with honour in most towns they passed through, sometimes they were met outside the cities by governors and some times escorted on leaving. They were shown all the important sites, provided with entertainment of all sorts, saw some of the finest scenery in Europe and saw many of the artistic treasures of the time. As for shrines and relics they had a grand tour of these all along the way and especially in Rome, e.g. the head of John the Baptist, two thorns from the crown of thorns, the nail that went through Christ's feet, a piece of the plate on which was written 'Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews', portions of the true cross, the cross beam of the cross of the good thief, and many more.

Now, what about those left behind? O'Neill's youngest son, Conn who was left behind was shortly afterwards arrested by the authorities. Chichester proposed that he, along with the son of Caffir O'Donnell should be sent "to some remote part of England or Scotland to be kept from the knowledge of friends and acquaintances or should be dispatched to the plantation of Virginia". In 1615 Conn O'Neill was removed to Dublin, transferred to England where the King sent him to Eton College. In 1622 he was sent to the Tower of London and never heard of again.

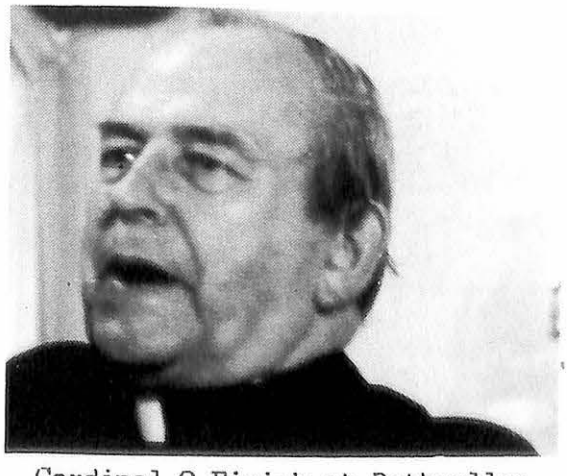
Caffir's son, Conn was more fortunate. Having been held prisoner in Donegal and later in Dublin, he was transferred to England from where he escaped to the Continent. A Donegal tradition claims he returned to end his days in Glenfinn.

Many of those who went with the Earls later pleaded with the English Authorities to allow their wives and families to join them there, and indeed some were successful as the English figured that by their going they were placing an extra burden on Spain and Rome.

The Earls were given a palace in the centre of Rome by the Pope - possibly what is now the Columbus Hotel that you pass on your left as you go into St. Peter's Square. In the days following their arrival they were well entertained and honoured by everyone including the Pope. Eight of them had the honour of carrying the canopy over the Holy Father during the Corpus Christi procession.

Yet the King of Spain and the Pope were always blaming each other for not being more generous towards the Irish exiles but before matters improved both Rory and Caffir, Maguire and others died in 1608 as reported in ODA No.2 and were buried in the Franciscan Church of San Pietro in Montorio where their graves can be seen till this day.

Editor's note - I've been told that a carpet covers that floor today, but it may be rolled back upon request to reveal the inscriptions on their graves. The grave next to the O'Donnells is that of young Hugh O'Neill, Baron of Dungannon. His father, the Earl, died in 1616 and is buried elsewhere in that same church. V.O'D.



Cardinal O Fiaich at Rathmullan.

General Rosy O'Donnell.

During the last O'Donnell Gathering (1982) in Donegal, someone asked about Rosy O'Donnell , a four-star General in the U.S. Airforce but alas! no one present had ever heard of him. While working on ODA No. 10, I came across the notes I had taken at that Gathering and the reference to 'Rosy', so I began to make inquiries. A few days after Christmas '88 a large envelope containing many photocopies of files and newspaper clippings arrived from the Department of the Airforce, Washington D.C. I am most thankful to them. Here is a synopsis of the contents of that envelope.

Emmett O'Donnell was born in Brooklyn on the 5th. Sept. 1906, his parents, Emmett O'Donnell and Veronica Tobin, educated him for a career in medicine but while at high school, Emmett visited Congressman William E. Cleary on his own to apply to the U.S. Military Academy. On graduation from West Point on 9th. June 1928 he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant of Infantry. He then entered the Army Air Corps and was assigned for flight training at Brooks Field, Texas.

In 1940 he was transferred to Hawaii and assigned as a Squadron Commander in the 11th. Bombardment Group. In September 1941, he led the 14th. Squadron of B-17 Flying Fortresses across the Pacific to Manella. This was the first mass flight of land planes to cross the Western Pacific from Hawaii to the Philippines. On the 7th. of Dec. the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour and began raids on Clark Field in the Philippines. Forced from the field by the raids, O'Donnell took to the air and attacked two Japanese warships. Five times he flew over his target while subject to heavy anti-aircraft fire and enemy fighters. He then returned to make a safe landing despite flat tires on two wheels. For this action he received the Distinguished Flying Cross.

When the beleagured defenders of the Philippines had lost all their planes and fields, the General and his men took up rifles to fight on the ground in what he called, "a dismounted bombardment group." However, they were forced to withdraw to Bataan, then to Mindanao and later to Java where he served as Operations Officer of the Far East Air Force during the Spring of '42. His group was then evacuated to India where he was assigned as Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations of the Tenth Air Force. In March '43 he was recalled to Washington to receive the Air Medal and a top staff post.

A year late, having been promoted to Brigadier General, he took command of a heavy bomber group and trained the men for six months in the operation of the then new strategic bomber, the B-29. He then flew at the head of his wing to Saipan in the Marianas Islands. On November 24th. he piloted the "Dauntless Dottie" the lead B-29 of the 111 planes that set out from Saipan on a 3,200 mile round trip to bomb Tokyo. Only two failed to return. For this action he earned the Silver Star. Rosy's comment was ,"It was a start and much better than getting run out of the Phillipines."

After the war in the Pacific he held several top posts in the Air Force until the outbreak of the Korean War when he was rushed from a Californian air base to take command of bombing operations in the Far East. His first B-29 units to arrive in Japan accomplished the outstanding feat of carrying out a maximum efford bombing mission in Korea 36 hours after the first B-29 touched down in Japan having flown from the United States. During this tour of duty he commanded the 15th. Air Force.

After the Korean War, General O'Donnell became Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel at Air Force Headquarters in Washington. In August '59 he became Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Air Force in which capacity he served until his retirement in '63. President John F.Kennedy held a special ceremony for General O'Donnell's retirement to pay tribute to what he called "one of the most distinguished careers in the history of the U.S. Air Force."

Among his many other decorations were: the Distinguished Service Cross, Distinguished Service Medal with one oak leaf cluster and Legion of Merit.

During World War II, his men salvaged a B-18 that had been hidden in the Philippine jungle. O'Donnell was assigned to fly a senior Army officer to Australia. His flight plan called for

him to land at a certain island to refuel; however, the condition of the aircraft was such that he felt he might not get back in the air again if he made the stop. Taking advantage of tail winds, he stretched his flight non-stop to Australia. On arrival he learned that the Japs had captured the island where he intended to refuel and, had he landed, they undoubtfully would have been captured.

Emmett O'Donnell, nicknamed 'Rosy because of his tendency to blush, was the grandson of a Civil War soldier. A keen sportsman, he played and coached football at West Point, was a member of the lacrosse, swimming, and football varsity teams at the United States Military Academy. He always supported and maintained a keen interest in the Olympic movement and was the U.S. Service representative on the U.S. Olympic Committee. In 1956 he was selected to represent the Dept. of Defence at the Games in Melbourne. In 1957 the Olympic authorities honoured him by making him a member of the Executive Board.

In the late 50s General O'Donnell and Senator Margaret Chase Smith feuded over the promotion of actor James Stewart to Brig. General in the Air Force reserve. Sen. Smith said Srewart wasn't qualified but O'Donnell disagreed.

On the 26th. Dec. '71, General Emmett 'Rosy' O'Donnell died of a heart attack at the age of 65. He was survived by his wife Lorraine Muller, and two sons, Patrick and Terrence.

"Money's Portrait of Hugh Roe O'Donnell" is taken from a little book entitled "Memories of the Irish Franciscans" and seems to be based on Fr. Donagh Mooney's pen-picture of Aodh Rua (12) but it does not give the poet's name. Fr. Donagh Mooney O.F.M. who was personally acquainted with Aodh and was by his bed side when he died (See ODA No.8) described him thus - "He was above the middle height, strong of body and of a becoming countenance, form and aspect. His voice was musical, and he was vivacious and quick. He cultivated justice and was an avenger of evil deeds. He was constant in his resolutions, truthful in his promises and unwearied in toil. In matters of military discipline he was watchful and severe. He was brave in battle and was urbane and affable to all." V.O'Donnel

News

As reported in ODA No. 10, two O'Donnell Clan gatherings are planned for 1989. The first of these is a three-day event beginning on the 17th. of June with a reception in the Mount Errigal Hotel, Letterkenny and followed by an evening of traditional entertainment and probably a short talk on the Clann history. There will also be a display of photos, books etc.
Sunday is the main day and events will be centred around Doon Rock, inauguration site of the O'Donnell Clan chieftains. Sunday's programme begins at three o'clock and will include unveiling of a plaque and talks on the Clan and their inauguration cermoney. Afterwards, entertainment will be provided in local taverns.

For Monday, a coach tour is planned leaving the Mount Errigal hotel at noon and visiting places of O'Donnell historical interest viz. Conwal Graveyard (last resting place of Godfrey O'Donnell one of our great Chieftains), Gartan Heritage Centre which contains information on St. Colmcille (author of the Cathach), Kilmacrennan Abbey (site of religious inauguration cermoney) and then on to Rathmullan where there will be a wreath-laying cermoney commemorating the 'Flight of the Earls'. Talks will be given at all venues. Among the speakers will be Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill (64a) and Frank O'Donnell (mentioned in ODA No.10). The Gathering will come to an end with a function in the Milford Inn that night.

For further information contact the secretary, Deirdre O'Donnell, Clonkillymore, Termon, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal.

As for the second Gathering, it begins on the 16th. of September in Donegal Town and ends on Sunday the 24th. It promises to be the best yet with a very ambitious programme already being planned. For information contact Mrs. D. Crossan, Secretary O'Donnell Clan Rally, Donegal Town, Co. Donegal. Do your best to be present at both or at least one of these assemblies.

CLAN RALLIES

The value of clan rallies in Donegal is seen as being very high and the potential is there to attract hundreds of clan members and their families. The O'Donnell rally this year will be followed in 1991 by the O'Doherty rally and the following year by the Sweeney rally.

Donegal Democrat 24th. Feb. '89.

MOONEY'S PORTRAIT OF HUGH ROE O'DONNELL.

I stood on Kilmacrenan on a day
That saw our gallant prince, O'Donnell, crowned,
With chief and clansmen clustered thick around,
A martial, fierce, magnificent array.
Trumpet to trumpet poured defiant bray;
The hoves of rushing charges shook the ground;
Then, when the tribal erenach had placed
Within the compass of his small white hand
The sceptre which no deed of his disgraced -
The sovereign, the imperial, ruling wand -
The skies quacked with the clamor of acclaim;
The mountains shouted back in sullen glee -
The very valleys knew O'Donnell's name -
Red bolt of battle! Pledge of victory!

I rode at the Blackwater at his side
When Bagnall's routed columns, erst so proud,
Streamed, like a shattered skirt of thundercloud,
Towards Armagh, spur and lash with wrath applied.
I saw him upon Castlehaven's beach
Waving his hand, what time he passed to Spain,
With sparse retainers in his faithful train,
Never again his native shore to reach,
Gaily he spoke to us: he would soon return -
Renew the fight, if God should give him grace:
My aged eyes within their sockets burn,
Hot tears of agony run down my face.
A poor Franciscan closed his eyes in Spain.
We'll never look upon his like again.

Comely his stature, tall and finely knit;
His features symmetry; his entire mien
With rare nobility of life was lit -
Buoyant, but with a buoyancy serene.
His voice was musical, but in its tone
A tender, patient melancholy reigned -
A sadness half inflect, and half ingrained.
A low wind through a ruined forest blown.
His aspect was a king's, majestic, slow,
Save when in his shielded eyes there blazed
An enterprise's momentary glow,
And the thin lid inquiringly was raised;
Then the great orbs flashed out, dilated broad,
And - pardon! - but he seemed a very god.

No perils daunted him; brave, courteous, true,
Each promise was fulfilled, each word redeemed;
Not of this bastard age of ours he seemed,
But of time whilst yet the world was new.
Fearless in battle, he loved discipline;
Punished excesses, honoured valiant men;
Encouraged learning, execrated sin;
Revered what lay beyond his wisdom's kin.
Yet so accomplished, so immaculate,
I've heard him say, if God would grant him peace,
By making the war's issue fortunate,
From camp and court he'd essay swift release,
Take our poor habit, and be buried with
Us in community of life and death.

Donegal Democrat 17th. Feb. '89.

£50,000 to be spent on Donegal Castle

By Vera Cave

Donegal Castle will be enhanced this year with the spending of a special allocation of £50,000 for works at the gate house.

The castle is the only monument or tourist facility in the county to benefit from the extra £3.5 million the Minister for Finance allocated in the budget to the Office of Public Works for tourism and heritage projects such as national parks, monuments and wildlife. However, the O.P.W. intends to spend over £1 million in the county carrying out normal maintenance and improvements in parks, at castles, stone circles and on wildlife projects during the year.

Much of its £900,000 for parks will be spent at Glenveagh Castle on restoration and conservation. The figure for national monuments will be around £70,000.

At Donegal Castle, the gatehouse built by Sir Basil Brooke in the 1600s will be adapted to provide facilities for visitors. The work is expected to include roofing the building and carrying out works on the interior together with the provision of information for visitors.

Gen. Emmett O'Donnell

Rory O'Donnell's Pardon.

In November 1602 Sir Paul Gore was sent by the Lord Deputy with the Queen's protection to Rory O'Donnell, who had petitioned to be admitted to mercy, with direction to bring him to the Deputy, then in Connaught. Accordingly, on the 14th of December, Gore brought him to Athlone, where with O'Connor Sligo, he made his submission to the Queen.

In the beginning of June 1603, Rory O'Donnell, along with Mountjoy and Hugh O'Neill with their respective retinues, embarked at Fyan's Castle, in the harbour of Dublin, on board the pinnance Tramontana, and sailed for Holyhead. They made a rapid passage, for next morning the coast of Wales was sighted. But then suddenly, the sky became overcast and a dense fog enveloped the ship. However, the captain kept a course running swiftly before the wind under full sail. A flight of gannets screaming and whirling above the rigging attracted the attention of the officer on watch, who concluding that they were near land, called to the helmsman to put her about. The command was obeyed immediately, and as the Tramontana came about, so close was she to the Skerries, that the boat hanging at the stern davits was smashed to pieces. Fortunately for them that the birds disliked having their desert habitation invaded.

Soon the fog cleared and their fortuitous escape became even more apparent to all on board. At noon they dropped anchor close to Beaumaris where boats were waiting to take them ashore. They then travelled via Chester to London escorted by cavalry as the King feared for their safety. Indeed it was a wise step, for wherever they were recognised they met with hostility and abuse. Indeed it was no wonder for many families there had suffered the loss of a dear-one in Ireland during the previous years.

Having reached London, the Northern Chiefs were well-entertained until the 6th. of June when they were summoned to appear at Hampton Court next day. Meanwhile, proclamation was made that his Majesty had restored both O'Neill and O'Donnell to his favour and that they should be of all men honourably received.

Indeed the King himself received them well and granted O'Donnell and his male heirs the privilege to ..."hold all the country of Tyrconnel, with remainder to his brother Caffar and his cousin Donald Og O'Donel, which his ancestors had many years past, with all the lands and rights of ancient time belonging to the lands thereof, excepting abbeys and other spiritual livings, the castle and town of Ballysahnnon, and 1,000 acres adjoining the fishing there. It was further provided, that O'Donel should renounce all claims upon Sir Cahir O'Doherty's and O'Connor Sligo's countries; and in lieu thereof, "because he received so large a country as Tyrconnel for his inheritance," the king thought fit to grace him with the name, style, and honour of earl of Tyrconnel, to hold to him and his heirs male, with remainder to his brother Caffar, and that the heirs male apparent should be created barons of Donegal." A footnote says, "To said Rory was granted at same time a custodian of all abbeys, &, within county of Tyrconnel, till we shall otherwise dispose of them. The aforesaid grants were all given under privy seal, at Tottingham Court, Sept. 4, 1603."

On the 29th. of September, in the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Dublin, Rory O'Donnell was invested with the style and title of Earl of Tyrconnell and empowered to have a place and seat in all parliaments and general councils in Ireland. This was the first time that a chief of Tyrconnell had borne an extraneous title which seemed to them in no way comparable to the old title -'O Domhnaill'.

Source: pages 11,34-9,45 of 'The Fate and Fortunes of the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell. by Rev.C.P.Meehan.
V.O'Donnell.

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